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State deals blow to harbor plans

Wisconsin officials say refuge is important, but state funds aren't available for project

News Tribune



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MADISON -- The Douglas County shores of Lake Superior could use a safe harbor, the state agrees. Just don't expect the state to build and maintain such a harbor.



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That's what state officials told Superior Days representatives Monday.

"They said it's something that is important, but they just don't have the money in the budget for it," University of Wisconsin-Extension resource agent Geoff Wendorf said after meeting with officials from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Douglas County has worked for years to secure funding for a Lake Superior harbor of refuge to be built along the 44 miles of shoreline between Superior and Port Wing. In fact, getting the state to agree that it might pay all of the construction costs for a harbor was a major victory of a past Superior Days. But higher-than-expected construction estimates and a lack of willingness on the part of the County Board to pay to operate and maintain the harbor worked against it.

The final blow was an estimate that upgrading the access road to the Cloverland site would cost more than \$800,000.

Earlier this month, Douglas County supervisors passed a resolution calling upon the state and federal governments

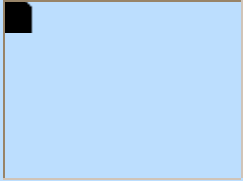
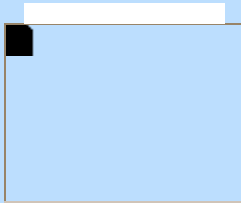
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...tion taking upon the state and federal governments to develop, operate and maintain a harbor. But state officials have indicated that having the state pay to operate and maintain a harbor is out of the question, Wendorf said.

County supervisor and harbor of refuge committee chairman Bob Browne expressed disappointment Monday at the project's fate.

"We feel it would have been a great opportunity for the working man to use that section of coast," he said. "You know, the man with the 16-foot boat."

Despite the unfavorable response from the state, Wendorf said it was important for the county to try.

"We carried our message down," he said. "We feel it's a legitimate issue."

In other issues, Superior Days representatives also asked the state for \$1 million to help build a proposed Great Lakes Forestry Museum in Rice Lake.

While saying that such a museum would be a great addition to the state, DNR officials told the delegates the department has no money in its budget for the project.

However, there may be funds available from the monies Indian tribes pay the state from their gambling operations. The state is suppose to spend some of those funds for economic development and tourism projects.

Project supporters want to build a year-round museum that would also teach woodland owners about proper forest management and be an educational center for elementary school students. A five-acre site in Rice Lake has already been donated for the museum.

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